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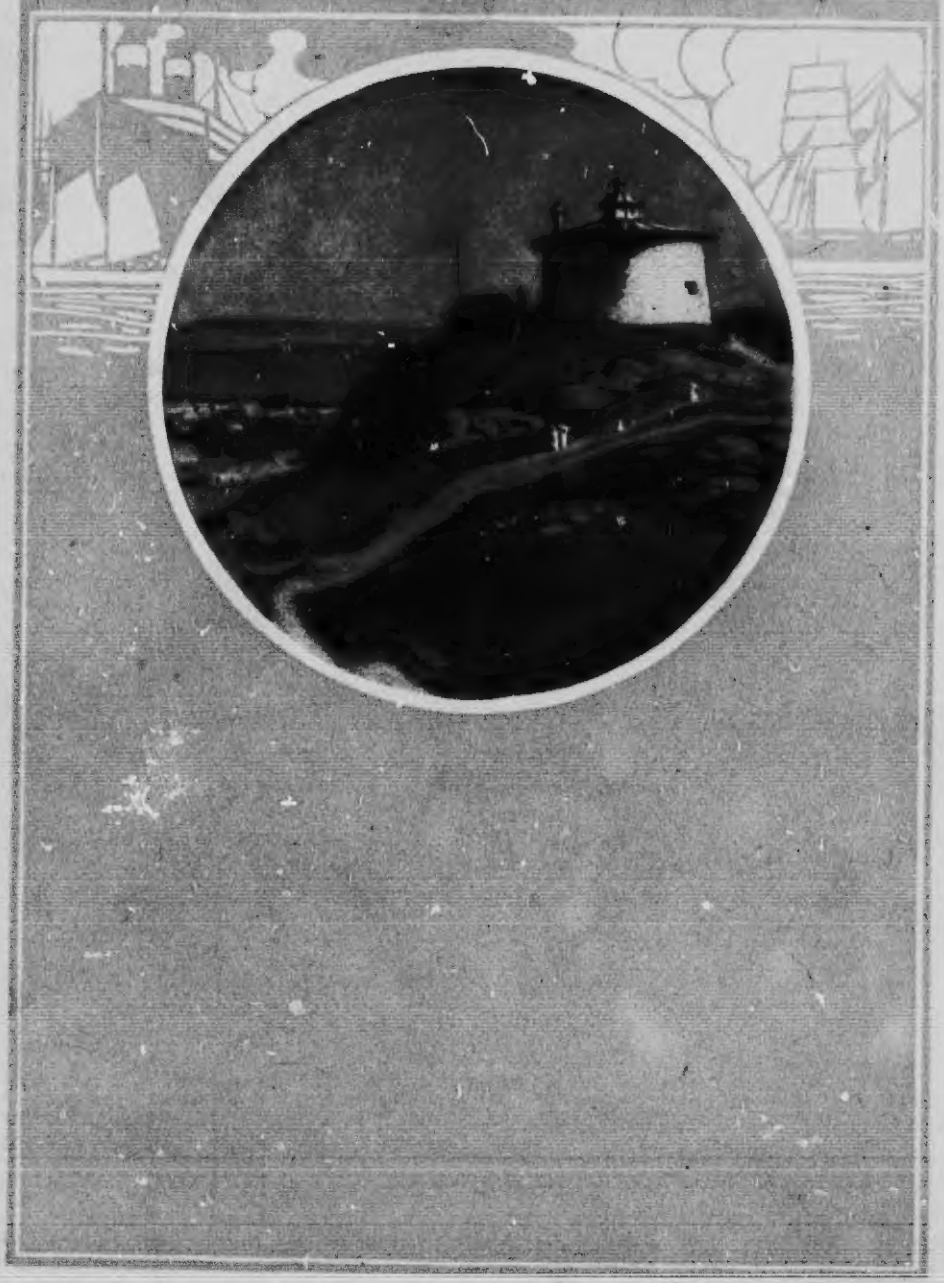
The City of The Loyalists



St. JOHN

The City of the Loyalists

Issued by the Canadian Government Railways
Intercolonial Railway & Prince Edward Island Railway

FIRST EDITION

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View of St. John, looking to Carleton

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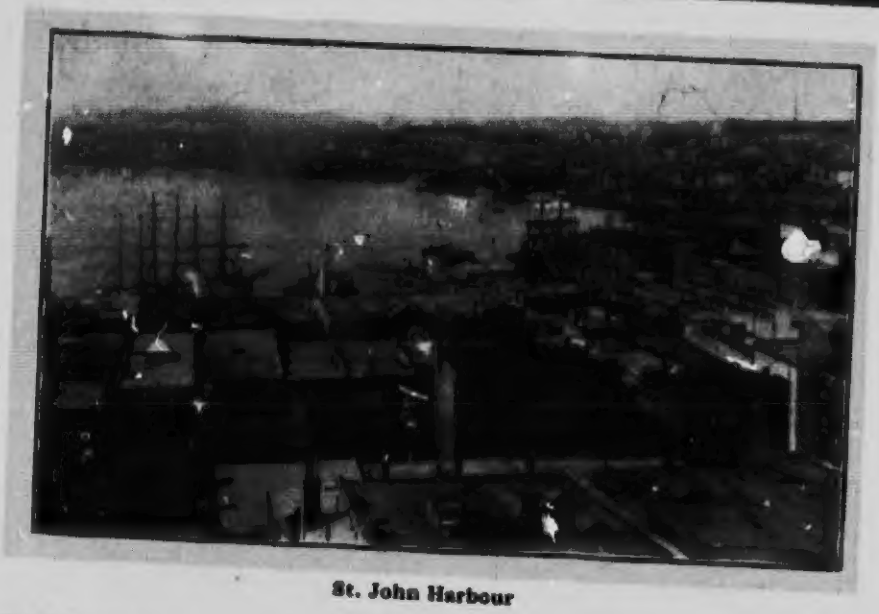

St. John Harbour

WHILE the casual visitor to Saint John would probably see in her busy streets, and on her craft-laden waters only a practical people sturdily bent on completing the trivial round of daily tasks, to him who paused a moment to learn her history, would be revealed a wealth of romance and of pathos lying beneath the apparently placid surface. From that early day in her history when a revengeful fur-trader took advantage of the unprotected condition in which he found the chatelaine of Fort La Tour to burn her home, and those of her helpless followers before her eyes, the story of Saint John and her struggles toward the right to the title, the largest, the most important and the most enterprising of New Brunswick's commercial centres must be read through successive glares of scarlet flames and lowering smoke wreaths. Again and again has the city, in various stages of its development, been almost entirely destroyed by fire. Again and again it has risen, gallantly and bravely, each defeat strengthening the determin-

Reversing Falls, St. John River

ation of its people to hold their own on the *rock-hewn, water-girdled* peninsulas they called Home. Each fire, however, has swept away some historic bit, has altered some original plan, and has destroyed some record, leaving for the present generation only the traditions of those earlier days when history was made within the city's gates.

Saint John, named from the river into which Champlain and DeMonts steered their quaintly square-rigged vessels more than three hundred years ago, on the festival of Saint John the Baptist, does not claim to be the most beautiful city in Canada, or even in the Lower Provinces, but it does claim, and with justice, to be one of the most picturesque. The rocky ridge upon which the city is built rises in a series of terraces from the waters of the Bay of Fundy. With infinite labour the streets have been cut through masses of solid rock. In many instances these streets run directly across the whole breadth of the peninsula, opening at either end upon the tidal waters whose ebb

The Beacon Light

and flow is one of Saint John's attractions.

Within the city are several public "squares" which the modesty of its people have never called parks, reserving that name for larger breathing spaces situated beyond the business limits of the town. From a point on the grounds at Rockwood, the larger of these Parks, a magnificent view of the Bay of Fundy, of the harbour and of the surrounding country may be had. When the sun shines and sparkles on the clear water of the Bay one may look beyond the oddly shaped Beacon Light that marks the Harbour Bar, beyond the "Isle of the Pheasant" whereon Champlain saw "wild grapes and great quantities of fowl," but where now a Marconi Station bespeaks the elimination of time and space, across miles of dazzling water to a far faint coast, the outline of the sister Province of Nova Scotia. Nearer at hand is Carleton, named after Sir Guy Carleton, an early Governor, who, tradition erroneously says, lies buried somewhere near the Presbyterian Church on the summit of the hill known in older times as

St. John Harbour

"Courting Hill." This name, however, is a disputed point, the less romantically disposed insisting that the hill should, as is the inlet of the harbour that curves about the eastern side of the city, be called "Courtenay" in honour of an early English Commissioner.

At the docks in Carleton, known for a time as Parr Town, through the "feminine vanity" of the wife of another Governor, lie numerous steamers, the descendants of the picturesque three-deckers of by-gone years. About their sails and cargoes hung an odor of romance that no amount of imagination can associate with the more practical steamer of the present. Today the steamers bring, as did the sailing ships of long ago, cargoes from all quarters of the globe, redolent of spices, and handled by the dark-skinned natives. From their decks, peoples of all nationalities and of many tongues step to our shores. Gone, however, are the days of Romance. Perhaps, if the shore in Carleton is followed past the wharves and docks beyond the "weirs," beyond the breakwater, past Fort Dufferin,

Martello Tower, St. John

whose frowning cannon guard the entrance to the harbour, along a rugged, beautiful and wild stretch of beach where at "Fern Ridges" secrets of the prehistoric age are revealed, until "Smugglers' Cove" is reached, a reason for the romance that clings about the sailing vessel may be found. This spot, according to legend, was a favorite haunt of those that flew the black flag from their masts' heads. Wild tales are told of border life in which privateers, Indians, French, English and American traders met at this secluded spot the followers of Blueskin and Captain Kidd.

Here too on the heights above Carleton is seen a gray Martello Tower, the sentry on whose parapet could easily see a foe on sea or land. It suggests robber barons, hidden dungeons and other delights of the middle ages, but it dates back no later than 1812, one of a series of preparatory defences in Canada.

Beautiful, however, as is the scenery ocean-ward, or along the wooded slopes and hills, it is at the Falls that the interest

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The Market Slip—Low Tide

centres. Here at a narrow gorge the river and the tides of the Bay come into conflict and twice in every twenty-four hours meet at this point in Titanic battle.

After Champlain, whose figure pointing seaward stands upon one of the city's squares, discovered and named the river, called, until then, "Ouigoudi"—The Highway—by the Mic-Macs, the country remained in the possession of the Indians for many years. Membertou, the chief of the tribe, was a wonderfully brilliant old man, who had talked with Cartier at Bay Chaleur in 1534. His lodge was sometimes at Port Royal, sometimes at Saint John, he and his warriors crossing the Bay with fearlessness in huge war canoes, whose prows were painted in fierce designs.

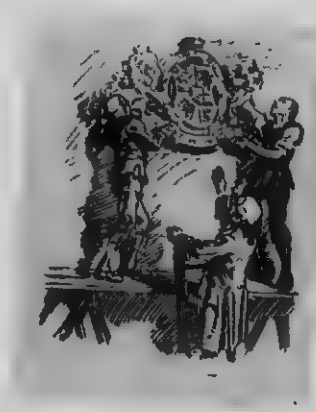
It needs no stretch of imagination to picture the scenes that attended Champlain when he took possession of the country in the name of the French King. Surrounded by his own motley crew, the gallant adventurers, and the good Fathers, of which the expedition consisted, he came ashore amid the wondering

The Market Slip—High Tide

crowds of Indians, at what in later years was called the "Public Landing." With impressive ceremony he planted the Golden Lilies of France where hitherto only the emblems of Membertou had been recognized. In 1783 the same place now prosaically known as Market Slip—witnessed an entirely different scene. Here came the first fleet of twenty vessels bearing the vanguard of the Loyalists—those devoted men and women who to retain their allegiance to the British Crown sacrificed their possessions in the United States and sought a new home in the nearest British territory. This they found at Saint John where they built the city whose people have ever since rejoiced in the designation "Saint John, the City of Loyalists."

Gone are the Indians, the Loyalists are sleeping in the quiet burial places, no traces of the French remain except perhaps it may be that the custom still in existence in Saint John, of ringing from the huge scaffold like tower at the market slip, the "Laborer's Bell" that summons each and all to

Rockwood Park



his daily task may be a continuance of a practice instituted long ago in some far off Province of France Between the days of Champlain and the coming of the Loyalists, many adventurers paused for a space at Saint John. Here Membertou assembled his warriors in large numbers. Here La Tour and D'Aulnay fought for the possession of Fort La Tour as it commanded one of the richest trading posts in Acadia. Here perished Lady La Tour, dying for her people and for her adopted country. She lies somewhere in Carleton, in a nameless unknown grave, this brave woman whose high courage and true patriotism deserve a more lasting memorial than that furnished by the fleeting memory of man.

For nearly one hundred years Saint John was the scene of many changes. The wars between the Indians and the New Englanders, the constant internal dissensions among the fur-traders, the unusual conditions that confronted the French commandants, all combined to keep the place in a continual state of turmoil, although it contributed to the picturesque life of the settlement. Courier du Bois, French Noblemen, Indians, Spanish, Flemish and American sailors, soldiers of fortune from many lands, all met within the walls of Fort La Tour, sometimes governed by the gallant de Valliere, sometimes by Villebon of keen and clever

Rockwood Park

statescraft, again by Boisherbert or La Corne, or perhaps for a time by a deputy, a serious black-frocked priest, who sought to turn his turbulent flock to the peaceful arts of fishing or gardening. Presently, however, affairs in England having for the moment ceased to need attention, it was remembered in high places that by the treaty of Utrecht, Acadia had been ceded to the English, although the French had declared that by Acadia, only Nova Scotia was meant. So vigorously, however, did England push her claim, that the Lilies of France gave place to the British Lion, and Fort La Tour was lost in a newer, better equipped Fort Frederick. On the Heights above the town, a new fort, long since abandoned as a garrison, but still known as Fort Howe, was established. Here it was in later years the famous Cobbett was stationed, here he met his wife, and here he wrote his rules for the conduct of young men that have made him so widely and so well known. Here at Fort Howe it was that Michael Francklin, some time Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia,and afterward Superintendent of the Indians, held in 1778, with all the pageantry at his command, a solemn council with the Indians whose aid was eagerly sought by both sides during the Revolution. Amid feasting and great rejoicing Francklin

Near Reversing Falls, St. John River

made his allies—for the moment at least—swear allegiance to King George, and obtained from them the medals given by Washington for earlier services.

With the coming of the Loyalists the tenor of the place was changed. Rapidly a little town grew up about the market slip, which to-day is still, with its lines of waiting trucks and the long wharves and open bit of water, a most picturesque spot. The wooded slopes gave place to well-defined clearings. Within a few years the "old burying ground" was laid out far beyond the limits of the town. Today in the heart of the City, children play around its curious old tombs, or sit under the shade of the trees, unconscious as they admire the brilliant flowers or watch the birds bathing in the fountain, of the historic dead beneath their very feet.

The precious Royal Arms which had been brought by devoted Royalists from the old State House in Boston, and which are now in Trinity Church, had been placed in a temporary Church. They were destined to know many changes, and have nearly been destroyed by fire but still remain the proudest possession of the Loyalist City.

The Old Coffee House on the corner where now the Bank of Montreal stands had already become a famous gathering place.

King Square

An insight into the commercial life of the time is afforded one when it is remembered that the site upon which the tavern was built was valued by a would-be purchaser as worth "a Spanish doubloon and a gallon of Old Jamaica." Here for many years the men congregated to talk over the affairs of the town, to transact business, to interchange with every passing traveller and sailor the news from the outer world; here they read the story of Waterloo and fought it over again months after it had been lost and won. Here came the wits and poets of the day, and here men forgot the struggle they were making in the newer country when they talked with those from over seas of the glories of the home lands. From Halifax, His Royal Highness, the Duke of Kent, for the moment moved his Court to Saint John, entertaining and being entertained with all the lavish hospitality of the times. Many years later, Edward VII, of peaceful memory, slept in the same old house that had sheltered his gay and dashing grandsire.

General Benedict Arnold paused in his meteoric career sufficiently long to establish himself in business in Saint John. His methods and his general haughtiness of manner did not please the people who hanged and burned him in effigy outside his house. These and many other memories cluster about the early life of Saint John. They are but shadowy reminiscences, as the city was almost entirely destroyed by fire in 1877, the last and most disastrous of three serious conflagrations. But from the ashes of its past there blossoms these and many other memories for those who are interested in the early history.

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